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Quick and Dirty Trunk Hose

From Moondragon

Despite a large number of people wearing doublets in the SCA, there are surprisingly few people who wear trunk hose (or slops or pluderhosen as they are also known) with their doublets. Most opt for some form of relatively straight-legged knee breeches. I suspect this is because most clothiers don't have a pattern for making trunk hose, or else they are intimidated by the very thought of making something so unusual.

This article is intended to rectify that situation. I make no claims to the historical accuracy of this method (it doesn't entirely agree with Janet Arnold, for example) but it's fairly easy to do, and the resulting garment looks good.

Construction

1. Start with a base piece of fabric that is at least twice the waist measurement by 2/3 the crotch seam measurement (i.e. for a 36" waist with a 21" crotch seam, the base piece should be 72" by 14".) See figures 1 and 1a.

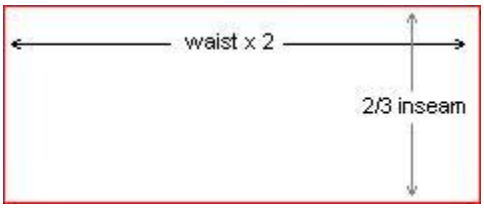

Figure 1. Trunk hose base piece.

Figure 1a. The base piece--actually two pieces (since my fabric wasn't wide enough) that will be sewn end-to-end--to form the inside portion of the trunk hose.

2. Sew the short edges together to form a cylinder with a circumference that is twice the waist measurement. Leave about 4" of the seam open at the bottom end. See figure 2.

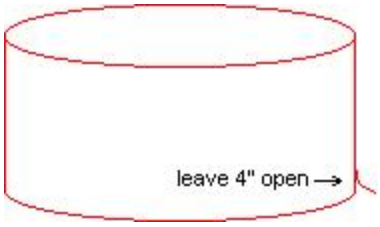

Figure 2. The cylinder.

3. Cut a 4" slit on the opposite side of the cylinder from the open seam. See figures 3 and 3a.

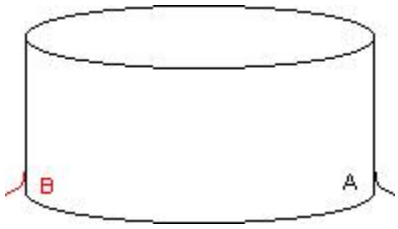

Figure 3. Second slit.

Figure 3a. The base piece sewn into a cylinder and showing the two slits at the bottom.

4. Sew the slit and the open seam together. This will produce something that looks like a very large pair of shorts. See figures 4, 4a and 4b.

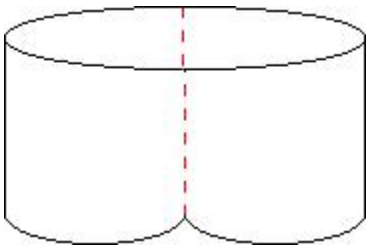

Figure 4. Sewing the crotch seam.

Figure 4a. The crotch seam sewn. Note that I'm making the padded and striped version described below, this is the outer piece.

Figure 4b. Outer and inner sections sewn together at the leg opening, showing the "very large shorts" stage.

5. Fold the upper edge over and sew it to produce a tube around the top of the trunk hose. Leave a few inches unsewn, and insert a drawstring or elastic. This will be the waistband. Do the same thing with each leg opening. (Personally, I use elastic, but drawstrings are more authentic. Neither option will affect the final look of the trunk hose.) See figures 5, 5a and 5b.

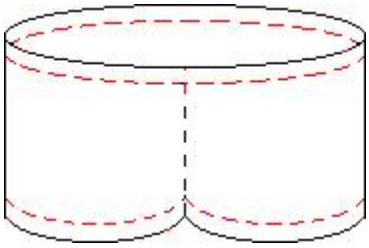

Figure 5. Waist and leg bands.

Figure 5a. Tube for the leg elastic. In this case, I sewed the bottoms of the outer and inner sections together, then put a second seam about an inch and a half above that. The unsewn opening for the elastic is on the black panel, just to the left of the Pelican trim.

Figure 5b. View from the top, looking between the outer and inner sections of the trunk hose, inserting the leg elastic into the tube.

6. At this point the trunk hose are ready to wear. The elastic or drawstring and the extra fabric combines to give the requisite "puffy" look. See figures 6 and 6a.

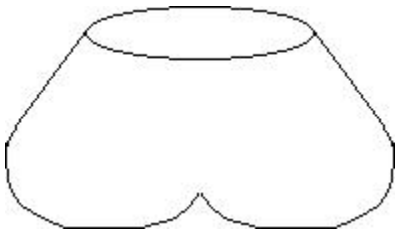

Figure 6. Finished outline.

Figure 6a. Finished trunk hose. Note that they are padded; this tends to give a better silhouette than depending solely on the extra fabric.

Complications

By itself, this method produces the right silhouette, but a rather dull garment, unless a brocade or other pretty fabric is used. There are several ways to make the trunk hose look better.

- Padded: Start with two pieces of fabric of the base size. Sew them together along the top edge, leaving two six-inch openings spaced evenly apart. See figure 7.

Figure 7. The opening on one side of the top of the trunk hose, for inserting the padding.

Proceed as above, but sew the two pieces of fabric together above the slit in step 3. (This keeps the padding from all shifting to one side.) See figure 8.

Figure 8. The seam in the center of the trunk hose,on the right edge of red panel 4.

In this instance, put in the leg elastic or drawstring first, then insert padding through the six-inch gaps before making the waistband. (I generally use poly-fiber pillow stuffing, but rags or other padding could also be used.) See figure 9.

Figure 9. Stuffing the trunk hose.

- Stripes: Start with two pieces of fabric in different colors. Each should be the waist measurement plus four to six inches (for extra seam allowance) by 2/3 the crotch seam. See figure 10.

Figure 10. Red and black fabric marked out to cut into strips for making striped trunk hose.

Cut them into strips of whatever width amuses you. See figure 11

Figure 11. Two sets of strips ready for sewing.

Then sew alternating strips together—yes, that's a lot of sewing, but since they're all straight seams, it goes fairly quickly. See figure 12.

Figure 12. Sewing the strips together.

This will produce a striped base piece; proceed as above. See figure 13.

Figure 13. Striped base piece for the outer section of the trunk hose.

I usually add some trim to dress up the basic red and black. If you're adding trim, it should be done after the outer base piece is sewn, and *before* the leg and waistband tubes are sewn--unless you like doing a lot of hand-sewing. This set of trunk hose has some spiffy Pelican-trim from the nice fellow at Calontir Trim. (https://web.archive.org/web/20190215065901/http://www.calontirtrim.com/) See figure 14.

Figure 14. Adding the trim.

- Slops or pluderhosen: Instead of 2/3 the crotch seam, use the full measurement or more. This will give a fuller and "droopier" look.
- Venetians: Make the vertical measurement of the base piece the distance from the waist to just below the knee, instead of 2/3 the crotch seam. In steps 2 and 3, the open seam and slit will need to be much longer, but the closed portion should still be 2/3 of the crotch seam. This will produce a pair of baggy, knee-length Venetians. Padding can be added to produce another look common in period but rare in the SCA.
- Paned: This is the style where the outer layer is slit vertically to show off the inner layer. Panes can be simulated by using the striped method described above, or done for real by making an outer base piece with vertical slits in it and pulling portions of the inner layer through the outer layer (in which case the inner layer will need to be much larger than the outer layer, perhaps three times the waist measurement.) This can be done by cutting slits in a non-fraying fabric, or actually hemming up a series of long panels and attaching them at top and bottom.

Paned slops can quickly reach a level of complexity that takes them out of the realm of "quick and dirty," but they might be interesting to try after making a few of the easier styles.

There is also nothing wrong with combining variations such as padded and striped or paned slops.

Points

Finally, a word about points. Points are ties that attach to the top of a garment such as the hose or trunk hose, and are tied through grommets at the bottom of the doublet. They hold up the lower garment and prevent "gaposis." This is useful when fighting, but makes going to the privy a bit of an adventure. Now I understand why they had codpieces.

To make points, attach pairs of long (15" minimum) ties at four to six places around the top of the trunk hose. Install grommets in the corresponding locations in the doublet. Thread the ties through the grommets (a servant is useful here) and tie them in big, flamboyant bows. Alternatively attach the points to the hose, and put grommet pairs in both the doublet and the trunk hose. See figure 15.

Figure 15. Mounting grommets in the trunk hose. I use a rotary leather punch with a piece of leather behind the fabric to get a clean hole.

Points gives an added element of historical accuracy that most people don't bother with.

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